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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000419

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA SEPTEMBER 14 AND
21: AL-KHOBAR, MECCA, AND MEDINA.

Classified By: By Acting Consul General CB Toney For Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY: In the Eastern Province on September 14, a substitute Imam at the al-Khobar Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque devoted his sermon to the holy month of Ramadan. He stressed the importance of total abstinence and helping the poor. The following week he continued on the same theme, instructing his congregation to "to read the Koran in its entirety."

2. (U) In Mecca on September 14 and 21, the sermons comprised discussion of the religious duties of Muslims during Ramadan, the need for the media to create a code of honor, and praise for Saudi Arabia's role in facilitating the September 16 Somalia Agreement. In Medina on September 14 and 21, the focus was also on Ramadan, and in addition, included a call on merchants not to raise prices. END SUMMARY.

AL-KHOBAR: RELIGIOUS DUTIES DURING RAMADAN

3. (C) At the al-Khobar Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque on September 14, the substitute Imam started the sermon by describing Ramadan as "a school that opens its gates once a year for only a month," during which Muslims learn, through total abstinence, what it means to be a good Muslim. He then described the attributes of a good Muslim (e.g. helping the less fortunate).

4. (C) Through fasting, he continued, "well-off Muslims not only earn God's blessings but get to know first-hand what it feels like to go hungry and thirsty, a divine process that helps the faithful relate to the world's poor." The Imam called on members of the congregation to strengthen their efforts in prayer and worship, as well as in "good deeds."

5. (C) On September 21, the substitute Imam focused once again on faith-related activities during Ramadan. In particular, he stated that reading the Koran "purifies the body and soul, and helps the worshipper remember the great powers of the Creator." He added that "the entire human race is prone to sickness, death and bad fortune, just as it is prone to happiness, life and good fortune."

MECCA: IMPORTANCE OF FASTING;

CRITICISM OF BEGGING

¶16. (U) On September 14, Sheikh Dr Abd-al-Rahman al-Sdays focused on the importance of fasting during Ramadan. He stated that the "essence, crux, and meaning of fasting is to achieve the stronger pillar; namely, piety to God." He also criticized the "serious phenomenon which spreads in this blessed month," "the phenomenon of begging."

THE MEDIA AND THE NEED FOR A CODE OF HONOR

¶17. (U) He called on "those in charge of the news media and the writers to fear God in the month of the Koran" and to "reach an agreement on a moral and professional code of honor to safeguard values and principles, to elevate the edifice of virtue after the spread of vice, and to confront the tendentious media campaigns against Islam....

¶18. (U) The Imam concluded with a prayer to "support Islam and Muslims, humiliate polytheism and polytheists, and destroy the enemies of religion;" "to liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque from the occupier and aggressor Jews;" and to "help our brothers in the land of the two rivers and unite their hearts on the Book and the Sunna."

CALL TO CARRY-OUT GOOD DEEDS

¶19. (U) On September 21, Sheikh Salih Al Talib remarked that "during Ramadan, souls become pleased with worship, delighted with obeying God, and accustomed with good deeds" and urged the congregation to "taste" the "sweetness" of worship of God.

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PRAISE FOR THE SEPTEMBER 16 SOMALIA AGREEMENT

¶10. (U) He then switched topics to Saudi Arabia's "efforts to reunify people, save their blood, and unite brothers," which he stated "was crowned a few days ago with the agreement and reconciliation between the brothers in Somalia following 20 years of wars and fighting."

¶11. (U) The Imam concluded with a prayer "for the wellbeing of Muslims," to "support Islam and Muslims and humiliate polytheism and polytheists," and to "grant victory to those who perform Jihad in your cause in Palestine and everywhere."

MEDINA: IMPORTANCE OF READING THE KORAN;
CALL ON MERCHANTS NOT TO INCREASE PRICES

¶12. (U) On September 14, Sheikh Abd-al-Muhsin Al Qasim also discussed the importance of worship and recitation of the Koran during Ramadan. During the following week's sermon on September 21, Sheikh Husayn Al-Shaykh focused on the "happiness" of Muslims during Ramadan, urged them to have "patience and noble manners," and called on merchants not to increase prices.

TONEY